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FM AMCONSUL JEDDAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9501
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0251
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1528
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1607
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 6820
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

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RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP;
PARIS FOR WALLER; LONDON FOR TSOU; AMMAN FOR WHITTLESEY

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SAUDI ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION: ENVIRONMENTAL
WATCHDOG FOR SAUDI ARABIA?

¶1. SUMMARY: Pol/Econ Chief met with the director of the newly registered Saudi Environmental Association. The organization will promote environmental issues in planning and decision-making at all levels of Saudi government. Within its mandate, the organization will accept and investigate environmental complaints from individuals. The Association will also publicize environmental awareness and environmentally friendly ideas within Saudi society. The management is interested in developing relationships with U.S. environmental organizations. END SUMMARY.

THE SAUDI ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION

¶2. Recently, Pol/Econ Chief visited the newly established Saudi Environmental Association. Like many civil society organizations and NGO's springing up in Saudi Arabia, the organization was founded by a number of public-spirited officials, academics, and businessmen, under the patronage of the late Prince Majid, who foresaw the need for an organization to advocate for sound environmental policy in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Environmental Society, as it was then, established its headquarters in Jeddah at the Prince Majid Development Center, which houses a number of other organizations which found favor with the late Prince.

¶3. In March of this year the Saudi government formally recognized the Society and registered it as an NGO under the name of the Saudi Environmental Association. The organization was announced to the public on April 10 at the Jeddah Hilton, during which Prince Turki, President of the Presidency for Meteorology and the Environment and other senior officials from environmental organizations were in attendance.

ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ASSOCIATION - PLANNING AND INFORMATION

¶4. The Association will interact with all levels of Saudi government: national, provincial, and local as an advocate for sound environmental planning. The Association hopes to have branch offices in all governorates and many cities in order to monitor environmental conditions and influence the planning process. The first objective of the Association is to promote environmentally rational and sustainable development policies. The Association is also working on an environmental awareness campaign aimed at the Saudi public and especially school children to educate them about conservation, efficient use of resources, and sustainable development.

REGULATIONAND REMEDIATION

¶5. The staff also expects to wrk to rectify environmental problems, such as oilspills, industrial accidents, and other issues of interest to the public. In response to a query, the director said that individuals will be able to lodge complaints concerning environmental issues with the Association which will then press the complaint with the appropriate national and local agencies. This is a very important innovation in a rapidly developing nation in which threats to public health and the environment are becoming increasingly common. In fact, the Association director admitted that more than 50% of all environmental problems in Saudi Arabia are caused by government actions.

¶6. The Saudi Environmental Association employs women. Among the officials met by Pol/Econ Chief during his visit was the female Executive Manager, Dr. Amal Najjar. The Director also expressed an interest in forming links with U.S. government and private sector environmental organizations.

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